



One Hundred Thirteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2013

The Honorable W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the training provided to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Reservist workforce, and to urge FEMA to quickly implement the recommendations made by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) after its investigation of the Reservist Training Program.

As you know, in May 2012, GAO released a report titled *Disaster Assistance Workforce: FEMA Could Enhance Human Capital Management and Training* (GAO-12-538), which identified several weaknesses in FEMA's now-expired Disaster Assistance Employee (DAE) program. Among other things, GAO found that FEMA had not established standardized hiring and salary criteria for DAE's, did not provide DAE Cadre managers with objective criteria to evaluate the performance of DAE's, and did not effectively manage or track DAE training activities.¹ FEMA concurred with several recommendations made by GAO and indicated that many of the recommendations would be addressed in the new Reservist program.

At my request, GAO prepared a follow-up report titled *FEMA Reservists: Training Could Benefit from Examination of Practices at Other Agencies*. That report found that FEMA had not reviewed the training programs at other federal agencies utilizing reservist workforces to carry out disaster missions and, accordingly, did not include valuable training practices that could improve the skill and performance of FEMA's Reservists. For example, unlike the United States Coast Guard (USCG), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the United States Forest Service (USFA), FEMA did not provide pre-deployment training to its Reservists. Unlike the USCG, FEMA did not provide its Reservists with job aids to reinforce material presented during training. Moreover, although FEMA has implemented a credentialing program to ensure that Reservists are qualified for the tasks they are assigned, the program is in its nascent stages and could be improved and further standardized by

¹ Government Accountability Office, *Disaster Assistance Workforce: FEMA Could Enhance Human Capital Management and Training* (GAO-12-538), at 20, 25, and 29.

implementing practices used by USCG and USFA. Finally, GAO found that FEMA did not solicit customer feedback about its performance collected by SBA.


I understand that FEMA is in the process of implementing improvements to its Reservist training program, including providing for 14 days of pre-deployment training for Reservists, and that FEMA has provided Reservists with position task books. That said, given that Reservists comprise nearly half of FEMA's total workforce and the critical role Reservists play in executing successful response and recovery efforts, I am troubled that FEMA has apparently not undertaken efforts to incorporate the expertise of other Federal agencies with reservist training programs into its Reservist training program. Accordingly, pursuant to Rule X and Rule XI of the House of Representatives, please respond to the following questions:

1. FEMA concurred with GAO's recommendation to review reservist training programs across the Federal government and to implement relevant practices into its own Reservist training program.
 - a. Please describe the process being used by FEMA to review and assess reservist training practices across the Federal government.
 - b. Please describe how FEMA is incorporating best practices into its own Reservist Training Program.
2. FEMA indicated that it will provide Reservist with 14 days of pre-deployment training.
 - a. When will FEMA's pre-deployment training program be implemented?
 - b. How does FEMA plan to deliver pre-deployment training opportunities?
 - c. What practices will FEMA use to reinforce pre-deployment training?
 - d. Will refresher courses be offered?
3. FEMA has provided Reservists with Position Task Books, which outline required activities, tasks, and behaviors, and serve as a record for task completion.
 - a. How were these Position Task Books developed?
 - b. How does the content of FEMA's Position Task Books compare to the job aids used by USCG?
 - c. Please provide representative copies of the Position Task Books to the Committee.
4. GAO found that SBA collects customer feedback to improve its own reservist training programs and policies, and that some of the feedback collected SBA is about FEMA's customer service.

- a. What process will FEMA utilize to gather relevant customer service feedback from SBA?
 - b. When will FEMA begin collecting customer feedback from SBA?
5. FEMA has implemented the FEMA Qualification System (FQS) and the Incident Qualification Certification System (IQCS) to track reservist training and qualifications. I understand that FEMA consulted the Forest Service's Wildland Fire Qualification System in developing FQS.
 - a. Please describe how FEMA consulted with the Forest Service in developing FQS. How did FEMA implement best practices from that program?
 - b. What process will FEMA utilize to review USCG's credentialing process? When will FEMA incorporate any improvements?
6. FEMA plans to fund Reservist Training through the Disaster Readiness and Support account within the Disaster Relief Fund for FY 2013. Sequestration cut the Disaster Relief Fund by about \$1 billion. Additional training for Reservists will be available online and at the Emergency Management Institute.
 - a. What effect has sequestration had on FEMA's Reservist Training Programs?
 - b. Given future reductions in spending caps mandated by the Budget Control Act, will FEMA have the resources necessary to implement a robust Reservist training program in the future?

I look forward to your response. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Cherri Branson, Chief Counsel for Oversight, at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member